Harris Lake Association

Harris Lake Association is organized to preserve and protect Harris Lake and its surroundings, and to enhance the water quality, fishery, boating safety, and aesthetic values of Harris Lake for today and future generations.

Effective 11/21/24 Harris Lake Association has been recognized as a 501c(3) public charity. As such donors can deduct contributions (annual Dues, etc.) made to the organization under IRC Section 170. A Donor Receipt Acknowledgement letter will be provided for any donation made. Please consult your tax advisor on the topic as your personal situation merits. Thank you for your generosity.

Officials and Contacts

Eric Burling – HLA President (262) 210-5189

Brian Schumaker – HLA VP/Winchester Town Lakes Committee Rep (608) 838-7171

Scott Elsner – HLA Secretary/Treasurer (608) 338-5331

Jim Evans – Winchester Town Lakes Committee Rep (920) 427-3040

Photo credit - Eric Burling

2025 Spring newsletter

As the days get longer and warmer weather approaches, I'm sure we are all looking forward to spending more time outdoors, reconnecting with neighbors and enjoying our beautiful lake. The Harris Lake Association (HLA) has been busy for the past several months. We left last July's annual meeting with a clear directive to continue the development of a long-term lake management plan, establish the HLA as a recognized 501c3 organization, and propose a resolution aligning the HLA dues structure with lake management plans. We have also been discussing the creation of an ongoing bi-annual newsletter (Spring/Fall). This is our first effort in that endeavor.

Photo credit - Carolyn FiglesthalerVogel

TOP STORIES - Harris Lake Association

- **Harris Lake Basics**
- **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)**
- **Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) Biology**
- **History of CLP in Harris Lake**
- **2024 Conclusions and Guidance**
- **Our Next Steps**
- **Future HLA Meetings and Dates to Remember**
- **Administrative Notes for HLA**

Photo credit - Eric Burling

Harris Lake the Basics

Harris Lake spans approximately 534 acres and is located in the Town of Winchester within Vilas County. It is characterized as a headwater oligo mesotrophic drainage lake, with a maximum depth of 57 feet. Harris Lake is in the Lake Superior watershed and drains to the Presque Isle River through Harris Creek. The watershed of Harris Lake is dominantly intact forests and wetlands, and less than 1% of rural residential areas and pasture/grass. The shoreline of Harris Lake is a total of approximately 5.8 miles of which 88% is natural/undeveloped and approximately 4% is developed/unnatural or urbanized.

Harris lake has a diverse aquatic plant community, supporting a total of 57 documented native species. Planning project studies have documented high aquatic plant Floristic Quality Index scores 42.5 and 44.3, this well above the regional median of 30.8. Notably, one of these species, northeastern bladderwort (*Utricularia resupinata*), is currently designated as a special concern species in Wisconsin. One exotic invasive plant species is known to exist in Harris Lake; curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispis*, CLP)." **(Onterra LLC Lake Management Planning, 2024)**

Curly-Leaf Pondweed Photo credit - Onterra LLC Environmental Consultants

Harris Lake - Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

CLP is easy to identify because of the "lasagna" style leaf with serrated edges attached to a "spaghetti" like stem

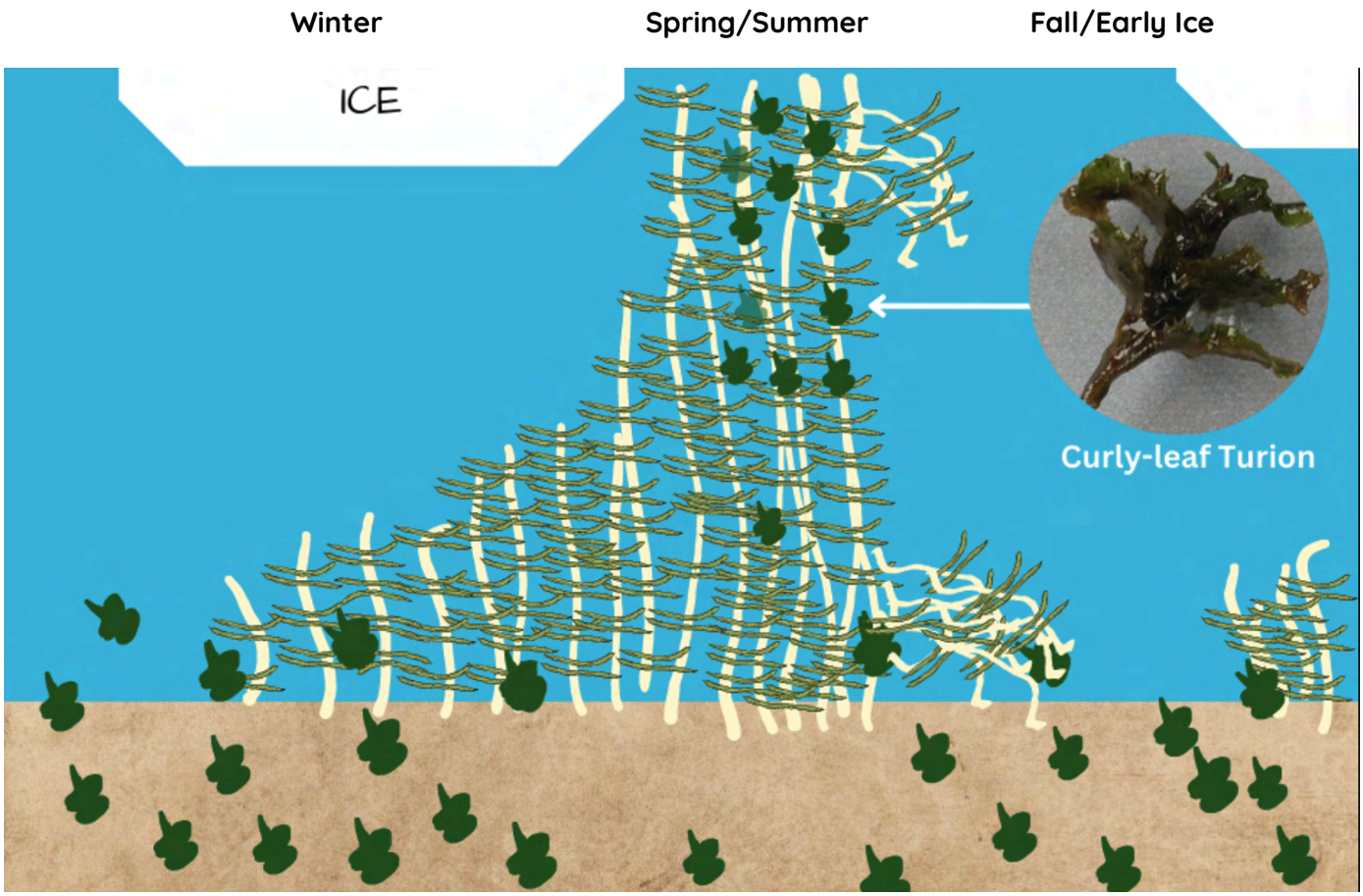
As discussed last July, the 2024 reemergence of Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) after multiple years of relatively low activity got everyone's attention. Over the past several months we have been actively engaged with our partners at the North Lakeland Discovery Center (NLDC) and Onterra, LLC Lake Management Planning as ongoing monitoring and evaluation of CLP on Harris Lake continued. We recently met to review the data provided by the 2024 Spring/Fall lake surveys and discuss move forward actions.

Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) Biology

To understand our current situation and future direction, a brief overview regarding the history of CLP in general and on Harris Lake might be useful. Identified in 2008, CLP has been present in Harris Lake for at least 17 years. A non-native species with origins in Australia, Africa and Eurasia it is widely believed that CLP was introduced into the United States in the 1800's when the common carp was introduced into the Midwest as a game fish. Subsequent movement of watercraft from lake to lake is the likely culprit of its continued spread. Growing from the shoreline to depths of approximately 15 feet, individual CLP plants can grow up to 15 feet tall with larger established colonies matting on the water's surface impeding both boat traffic, swimming and other water sports.

Matted Curly-Leaf Pondweed Late July

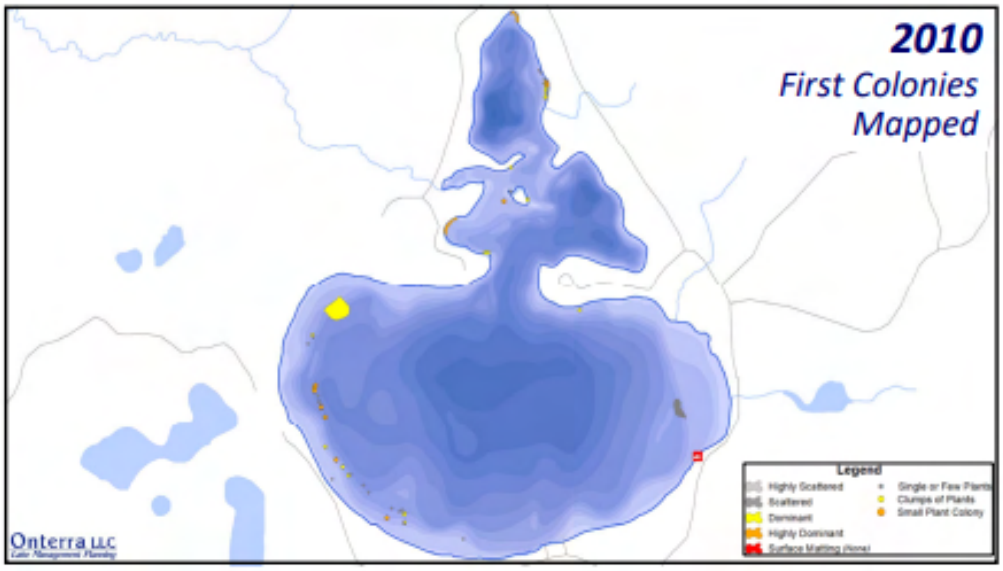
Unique in nature, CLP's competitive advantage as an invasive species is its ability to establish itself and grow over the fall/winter when other native plants are dormant. On Harris Lake, CLP's life cycle begins in July – August annually when mature plants die and release reproductive structures, known as turions. Turions are about a half inch in size and resemble a small pinecone. Each CLP plant can release tens of turions. Once released, turions travel throughout the lake until settling on the lake bottom. Settled turions often sprout in the fall when other plants are dying back and overwinter under the ice as a small plant, getting a jump start on the next growing season. Turions can remain viable in the sediment for 10+ years with some "programmed" to sprout in varying future years. By the time piers are put into the water each spring, CLP is established and actively growing. Recent data suggests a strong correlation between lake ice/snow cover and the following year's growth with milder winters resulting in increased CLP prevalence.



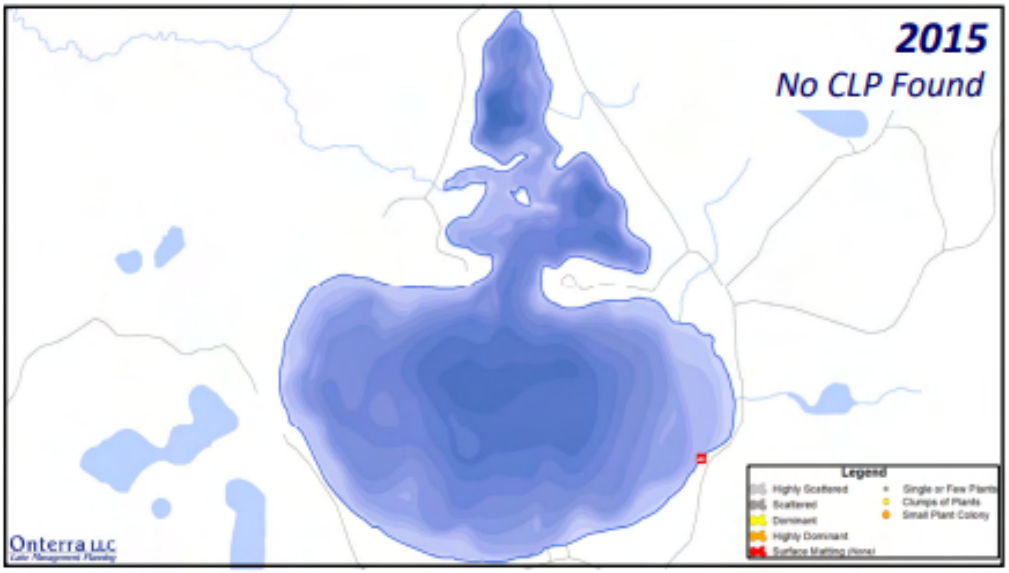
Curly-Leaf Pondweed Seasonal Life Cycle Diagram

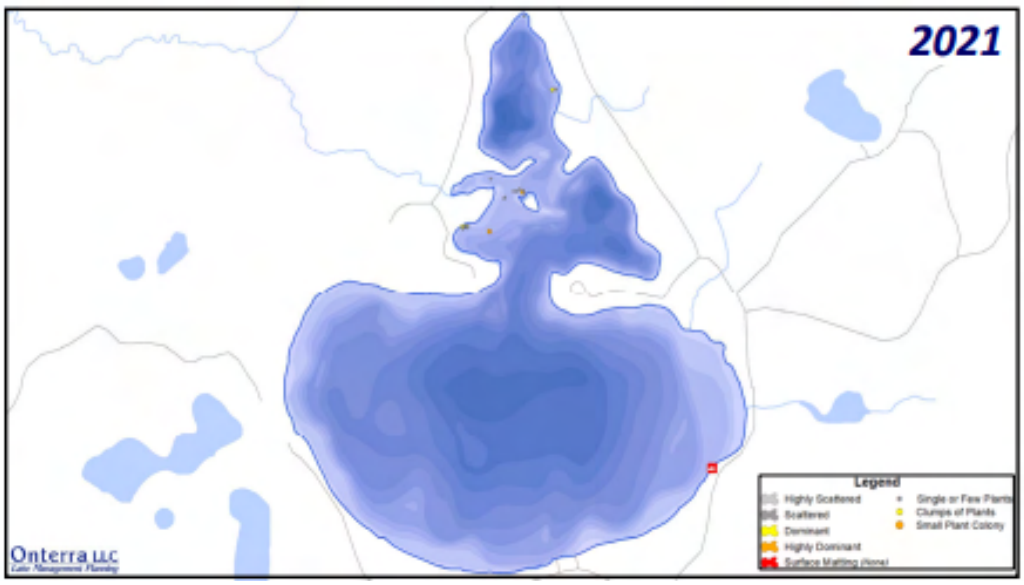
History of CLP on Harris Lake

Once CLP was discovered in Harris Lake, immediate actions were taken to address its presence. Beginning in 2009, annual Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) surveys were completed. The results of early surveys which identified the first CLP colony in 2010 led to the herbicidal treatment of an aggregate 16 acres over three years (2011-2013) in combination with 30 hours of hand harvesting in that timeframe.

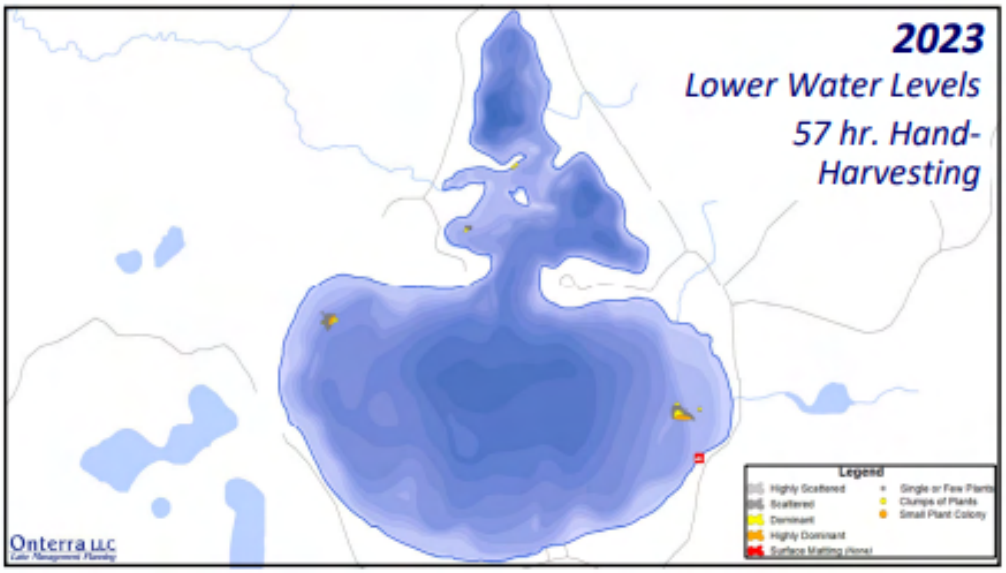


2014 – 2022 saw minimal CLP activity with only a handful of plants removed annually, including two years showing no visible CLP.



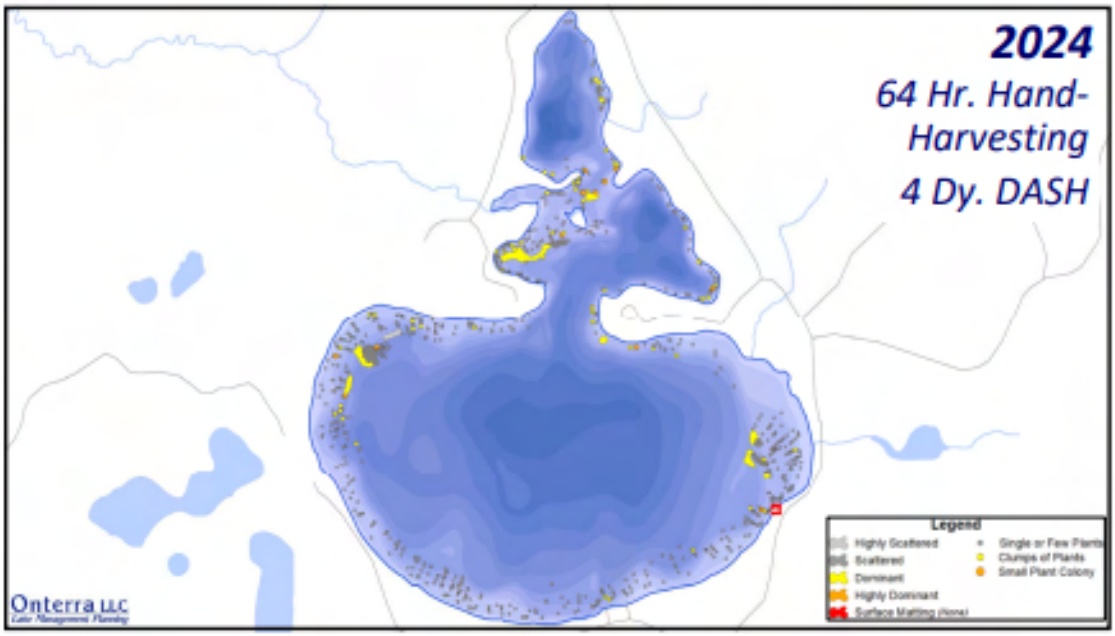


Beginning 2023, the landscape began to change with CLP colonies identified adjacent to the boat landing as well as the southwest corner of the lake resulting in 57 hours of hand harvesting to manage.



In an effort to establish a resource for long term funding, the Town of Winchester, with the support of NLDS and the HLA applied for, and received, a three-year Surface Water Grant (2024-2026) specifically designated for AIS control. The grant value totaling $39,560 covers lake management consulting services as well as hand and mechanical CLP harvesting. The three-year cost to HLA totals $9,892 with the balance subsidized by the State of Wisconsin. In 2024 we saw a noticeable change in the CLP population. After a mild winter with little snow, below average ice cover, and an early ice out the amount of CLP in Harris Lake was far greater than any previous year. CLP was found throughout the majority of shoreline and across the

lake in depths up to 15ft. Subsidized by the recent AIS control grant, the HLA approved 64 hours of hand harvesting as well 4 DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting) days throughout the Spring and Summer of 2024.



2024 Conclusions and Guidance

This Spring, the HLA met with Onterra, LLC and NLDS to evaluate the 2024 survey data and begin development of a move forward CLP mitigation plan. The conversation did not go as anticipated. The consensus regarding the 2024 CLP increase was that it was a development years in the making. Turions, dormant for years in the lake sediment, found the conditions resulting from the mild winter of 2023-2024 favorable for growth. The guidance provided is that CLP cannot be eradicated and that nuisance control, essentially managing CLP with the objective of minimizing any navigation and recreation impediments, was the suggested course of action. To accomplish this objective we will need to develop and implement an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM Plan) which is a flexible plan designed to utilize a combination of methods (Monitoring and Planning, Hand Harvesting, DASH, Ongoing Education, etc.) under the umbrella of a clearly defined Objective. While the message is difficult to digest, it's important to note that the 2024 identified CLP amassed less than 6 acres (approx. 1%) of the lake's footprint. Also of note is that Harris Lake remains an extremely healthy, viable lake with an abundance of aquatic plant varieties. **The consensus is that with a clearly defined purpose, the necessary funding, and continued education on the topic Harris Lake and all who enjoy it can coexist with CLP.**

Our Next Steps

Over the coming months the HLA, with the ongoing support of our lake management partners, will initiate the steps necessary to draft an updated Harris Lake Active Plant Management plan (APM Plan). This is an important step as the APM Plan serves as a gateway to future grants and permits and is required for any CLP related activity other than hand harvesting. Deliverables will start with a defined Harris Lake end goal. Specifically, what do we hope to accomplish? Once a defined APM Plan is in place, an annual Aquatic Invasive Species Control Plan (AIS Plan) consistent with the overarching APM Plan framework will be defined. Where the APM Plan is strategic in nature, the AIS Plan is tactical, identifying specific actions, prioritizing areas and defining quantity of effort. A summary of proposed next steps and related timing will be presented at the July 5th HLA meeting.

Admittedly, there is a lot of information summarized here. Please reach out to any HLA Officer should you have further questions. We will do our best to address your questions.

Save the Date - Upcoming HLA Events

- **July 5th, 2025 – *Annual HLA Meeting***
  - 9:00am @ Scholl Community Impact Group 13141 Old W Road

Photo credit - Shannon Brimmer

Administrative

- **HLA Directory Update - Contact Information**
  - The HLA Directory is the main source of property owner contact information. If you have not previously provided, or if your primary address, phone number or email has changed, please forward your current information to Scott Elsner (SGELSNER@Yahoo.com) for directory inclusion.

- **2025 HLA Dues - 2025 HLA Dues have been requested and total $50 per family.**
  - Outstanding dues can be paid by check made out to "HLA" and mailed to Scott Elsner - 7866 Black River Road Verona, WI 53593
  - Venmo to Harris Lake Association HLA@Harris-Lake-Assoc (4 digit phone code is 2119)

Learn more about Harris Lake on our Website

Harris Lake Association

14283 Harris Creek Lane
Winchester, WI 54557
info@harrislake.org